

White Shark Tales

vanarchy in the USA.



as told by Captain Ahab, CrimethInc. Secret Agent.

fin.

Written by Captain Ahab, with help from Ishmael, and friends—mentioned within and without—peppered across the face of the earth.

Text Revived & Revitalized by Circe Circulations, a division of the CrimethInc. ex-Workers' Collective, standing in for the CrimethInc. Bureau of Antiquities.

run out, we'll throw donuts to clog their arteries!—we'll lie, cheat, steal, fuck, and do it all over again! We'll do everything when they expect us to do nothing, hold each other's hands as we sweat from our darkest fears, kiss tenderly beneath the last of the trees, cry the oceans of tears we've been holding back all these years, and drive until tomorrow's dawn. When the sun rises and the first rays fall through the horizon, our futures painted in colors that we might never have dreamt, the fate of The White Shark becomes imminent. Our smiles, our memories, our skins, our flesh, our bone, our sweat and our lives, all of these things will outlive that poor, damned van. As it happens, we are alive and we're not going down with this ship. Not tonight.

Prélude.

The strength of capitalism lies in its ability to make us be still. Where there is stillness, there is the danger of being chained down. It slips upon you like a thief in the night, tip-toeing past your defenses. It first appears in many guises—careers, expectations, degrees, promises… parents, neighbors, children, employees, students, rent, mortgages, plans that we never had a say in and futures that aren't ours to possess. Yes, the capitalist thief moves quietly in the night, and the thief is efficient. The thief takes everything, and leaves you nothing but a shell, a cheap imitation of the life you really want. Nevertheless—the landbarons, however nefarious, cannot pillage the houseless.

There are many paths that leave this world of poor-paying jobs and unfulfilling lives. To each her own path—it would be arrogant to attempt to tell you what your path is out of the mundane humiliations of everyday life. In sheer physical terms, there are many ways to be on the move. You can just walk to the side of the road and stick out your thumb, and a stranger will pick you up and take you on the road. For those of you who enjoy the usage of your legs, you can always just walk through the woods, relying on wild berries and the kindness of a stranger farmer for a bowl of porridge in the morning. Some may enjoy hopping on the underground railroad, modern-day hobos criss-crossing the country on the forgotten industrial skeleton of our most digital of societies. For me, it was a White Shark that stole my heart. Nothing much, just a normal white van, of cheap make and dodgy American build. I'm not sure how it all came to pass, how the Shark was released upon the country to wreak innumerable acts of utter piracy, revolt, and lack of regard for all capitalist values (except excessive gasoline

… and yet, how can you have no house, no possessions, nothing to your name but the clothes on your back? The answer is simple—you must always be on the move.

consumption). I remember only that there was nothing left for me where I was. There had been too many horrors, too much failure—glorious failure, but failure nonetheless—and I felt like a ghost in my own hometown. It occurred to me that maybe I needed a change of surroundings, so I grasped my best brother-in-arms Ishmael by the shoulder one lonely night and told him we should do it, just leave it all behind. We met with an elite group of co-conspirators gathered in the wreckage of the former anarchist compound amongst the slowly creeping kudzu. We decided to leave right then and there the ruins of our youth, and we gave little heed to the future. All we had was a few ideas, a few dates and events, a few scraps of a plan, and an atlas. Being a generous soul, I volunteered my old van, purchased from one of my neighbors whose mother had recently died, for transport. After all, we had to make it to these events on time, and train-hopping and hitch-hiking are notoriously unreliable. Little did I know we were releasing a monster, a monstrous shark the like of which I have yet to see again.

None of these stories are fictional, despite their ludicrous nature. Indeed, all have happened to me. However, names have been changed to protect the innocent (or, to be precise, the not-so-innocent), and the chronological order of events has been changed to throw off the fucking feds! Also—these adventures haven't been written down to glorify the last year of my life, but to bear witness to the possibilities all of us have before us. Indeed, there are many adventures of grander scope than mine in this world, but I still hope these tales warm some lonely soul… and cause her to quit her job, jump in her van, and never look back.

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Nocturnes

In the end, it's not so much that the power of capitalism lies in stillness. Stillness—a certain measure of quiet and solitude—is often essential. Some communities are too big to fit in the back of a van—hell, sometimes band equipment won't even fit in a van! A van, like all defined space, has limits: it is merely an enclosed bubble of steel, fueled by a vicious combination of modern technology and ancient remains the fate of which is the damnation of fresh air and healthy life. Yes, I said it, automobiles are evil—and as we discover the devastation of the old world, we must then undermine it so as to welcome its descendants to this new world. We will never be free from history if we cannot learn to carry our homes with us: in our hearts, our vessels, and our adventures. The stubbornness of constant travel will not come to our aid as we have so dutifully done on its behalf. Freedom is not a thing happens to you. No—freedom is something that happens *because of* you. Freedom is something you live, you act, you *do*. It's both as possible and impossible as getting that real fucking crazy plan—the one that no one would ever believe you capable of—in your head and *doing it.* In a strange way, I find it moving that even in America—this land paved with highways of gold and fueled by the blood of the world, a teetering architecture built to collapse beneath our wheels—a van can be a vessel of freedom. If even a lowly automobile can become the leaky raft of a castaway band of runaway slaves, we must ask: Where are the other underground railroads, avenues of escape, other possibilities of liberation, other vessels to adventure?

Our civilization is an anachronism—or, as the bards sing: a flaming car with no one behind the wheel. We've seized the wheel just this once, which we admit may well have been impossible, and anxiously wait for the next eager cadets to pick up the pieces and try their luck. Imminent demise is on the horizon—let us love our doom with all faith in the future lost. From this vantage point, anything is possible. We can make love in the back of dingy car-vans, eat rotten vegetables from filthy hands, make mockery of their laws, steal from bankers and barons and share with all those in their shadow, throw tear gas back at cops—and when the canisters

proclaiming our "freedom," songs about attacking innocent countries, and flag-waving. The radio stations, ever ignorant, began playing "Born of the Fourth of July." These war-hungry madmen filled the airwaves with their calls for vengeance from their comfortable chairs in The White House, pasty bureaucrats whose children would never die in a war, plump God-fearing politicians who feel no guilt for raining hellfire onto families in the name of security and a quick buck. Their hypocrisy stank to the high heavens. At least the murderous Al-Qaeda had the courage to fly the plane into the World Trade Center themselves instead of pushing buttons from behind a screen. I struck back the only way I could, with an act of kindness towards a stranger. A grizzled hobo stood beside the highway in Alabama, thumb proudly stuck up in the air. So, tired and sick from caffeine, I picked up the man, who jumped in White Shark's belly. He gave me a cracked smile, and before long we were chatting up storms, telling story after story. It was like a Thousand and One American Nights, each of us telling stories like our very lives depended on it—which they did, since these stories were the only thing keeping me awake as we headed inevitably north. The strange hobo, twice my age at least, started telling stories of fishing, of growing up in the wilds of rural Louisiana, of his stint in the military. Slowly, it came out that we both hated the government with the intense passion that most people reserve for their lovers and family, and we loved our lovers and family with a love that most people reserve for God. The hobo had a child in Virginia he wanted to visit, and I had my own tribe in my small, southern hometown that I missed as well. Finally, too exhausted to drive any more, I pulled off to a deserted rest station in Mississippi, and, as the crickets chirped away, the hobo took a bottle of whiskey out of his tattered rucksack, The White Shark's lights dimming as I turned the engine off. I took a sip to calm my tattered nerves. I began thinking of new adventures, new horizons, new chances to fight for everything I held precious in this world. Yes, The White Shark had to retire with the anarcho-mechanic, if only for a time. But she would ride again. As the traveler and myself nursed whiskey in the warm Southern night, we promised each other that we would hold onto our stories. We would never forget.

VANARCHY IN THE USA

White Shark Tales

...in which a boy and his van set out to liberate each other...

by Captain Ahab

1

Only *a* matter *of* time before banks.

Somehow, The White Shark had swallowed Isabella from Brazil—although exactly how this happened remains something of a mystery. Perhaps it was because she'd just been arrested at a demonstration in Philadelphia (and I'm sure the paranoid Philadelphia cops were shocked by her passport—the *International Conspiracy* of *Anarchists* manifesting itself!), or perhaps it was because the white van had carried the CrimethInc. troupe to a presentation in Worcester where we complimented her video project with music made with purely dumpstered metal scraps we had foraged from around town the day before. To be honest, I have no idea. The White Shark is a magnet for discontents and malcontents alike, with absolutely no respect for borders, and its siren-song is hard for anyone, the most headstrong especially, to resist.

One problem about The White Shark—you have to feed her to keep her happy, and she will except no other food but gasoline, occasionally garnished by oil and transmission fluid. We had landed in Maine after ending the North American insurrection tour in New York City (due to unfortunate circumstances, but mostly just having been around each other for so long we just hated each other!).

Now, with every single member of our merry crew utterly and completely broke, escaping the ever-pleasant woods of Maine was going to be a problem. The obvious thing to do was to just steal the gas, which we had done a few times before. However, in the wise words of Ishmael, "Sometimes you've got to keep the small laws to break the big ones," and given that The White Shark currently carried one recently arrested international and at least one felon, getting caught brazenly stealing gas would be amateur. Also, one key to stealing gas is having multiple escape routes, and Maine has but one lonely highway. There had to be an easier way to get money.

After considerable deliberation at our secret log-cabin-deep-in-the-woods of-Maine, we took out maps and decided we were going to raid a Wal-mart

before, in utter exhaustion, The White Shark collapsed again, dead. Quaking in terror and avoiding looking the soldiers and police in the eye, we walked into the gas station and pleaded with them to let us stay the night. Confused, the clerks merely shrugged and smiled. We got The White Shark back into the gas station parking lot. Ishmael looked me in the eye, and said, "You know, I normally try to stay hopeful with these things, but I bet 50:1 The White Shark is dead." I nodded in somber agreement. How were we going to get rid of the corpse? I didn't even have legal registration! Our options were limited, we were thousands of miles away from home—correction, we had no homes—and the only way to dispose of The White Shark was to drive it off a fucking cliff. In bleak despair, I told Ishmael that a captain always has to go down with the ship as I fell asleep in the driver's seat.

In the morning, we woke up and had one final idea. We were going to call the hometown anarcho-mechanic. We went to the nearest payphone and called him and described the symptoms. He mulled over it, and within seconds came up with a diagnosis for The White Shark. Over the length of a thousand miles, his wise words told me to open the hood and see if our engine belt was still there. Putting down the phone, I walked over, followed his advice, and—behold, the anarcho-mechanic was right! It was just missing, it must have fallen off somewhere on the highway! Apparently, once the belt fell off, the engine couldn't work the alternator, so one by one everything inside The White Shark died as the battery drained. Leaping in joy, I heaped a million blessings upon our dearest anarcho-mechanic, and walked down the highway until we found, surrounded by vicious barking dogs, a tiny little automechanic shop. A man who resembled nothing so much as a leprechaun emerged, and as we explained the problem to him as best we could, he smiled and drove us back to the beached White Shark in his truck. He jumped inside the metallic bowels of The White Shark, and after some messing around, attached what appeared to be giant rubber band correctly to the engine. We restarted the engine, drove it around for a test drive, and received a final wink as we handed him twenty dollars in pesos. The White Shark was back on the road—her crooked grill, positioned over a crooked bumper, smiling a wicked shark smile.

Back on the road, we did a maniacal drive straight back to the States, matching our earlier trip in furious intensity. Our funds slowly dissolved, and eventually I was left with barely enough blood money to make it back to my hometown; Ishmael had only a single dollar to his name. After recrossing the border without incident, I dropped Ishmael, Hibb, and our brave and intrepid translator—who had jumped into The White Shark at a moment's notice on the West Coast, and whose services had proved invaluable—at the Greyhound station. We all hugged, and, looking each other straight in the eye, Ishmael and I promised each other that we would meet again for even further adventures. I felt like I was losing my family, and as we bid each other farewell, I felt strangely alone.

As I drove the now-empty White Shark on the final leg of its trip, the anniversary of September 11th rolled around. The radio waves were jammed with the President's hate-filled and patriotic speeches cursing our enemies and

never possibly have imagined in our wildest dreams. If people ever tell me that anarchy can't work, I'll just tell them to get in a car and drive four days south, and see revolution with their own eyes.

As if emerging from a dream, it came to us that we had to leave Chiapas and return to our home in The States. After all, despite the temptation to live the revolution with these mountain folks, we had to continue our own struggle amidst our own people. Besides, Ishmael had a court case coming up. The White Shark began its final ride home, and we looked on a map and saw what appeared to be large highway straight to Minatchitlan from Tuxtla, the capital of Chiapas. So off The White Shark went, bidding fond farewell to the free air of the Zapatistas, and down the highway. We should have expected trouble as we entered the highway, as a large toll or military blockade—a somewhat hard distinction to make in Mexico—had been set up, but we drove right through it without pause, leaving the guard to stare after us in confusion. We drove miles and miles, completely alone upon what appeared to be the finest road in Mexico. As the sun set behind the mountains, we found the situation strangely eerie. Yet the road continued ever onwards—or so we thought.

Out of nowhere, a giant lake appeared on the horizon, and the road went right into the lake! Throwing on the brakes, we realized that the Mexican government had been optimistic in placing this particular highway on the map. Not knowing what else to do, we turned around and drove back to Tuxtla, sorrowfully noting that we had wasted a whole day driving on a road to nowhere.

As darkness set in, the poor White Shark started having the automobile equivalent to the tremors before a heart attack. The overheating of the engine is a dread phenomena in all cars, in which, rumor has it, the engine can be utterly destroyed, so we pulled off to the side of the road and let The White Shark simmer down. The White Shark simmered a bit, but when we starting driving again, the air conditioner mysteriously stopped functioning. Then, after a few more minutes, the engine started over-heating again and, to our increasing horror, the lights went off. We pulled off to the side of the road, and let The White Shark rest again. When we started The White Shark once more, it made it a few yards to a nearby gas station, and suddenly, in a truly surreal moment, the gauges all started moving backwards. The speed, the heat of the engine, everything starting going to zero before our very eyes. The engine refused to inject fuel, and, paralyzed with shock, we coasted into a gas station that was full of soldiers wielding giant machine guns [editor's note: this is because the Mexican government has nationalized its oil and gas companies, so the state manages all gas stations and the military tends them]. We quickly backed into a strange parking spot, and then opened the hood to see if we could deduce what was going on. The heat coming from The White Shark's insides was scalding. We opened the oil tank—it was fucking empty! We ran into the station and began desperately pouring oil into The White Shark, trying to revive her. It worked—we restarted the engine, and The White Shark's lights came miraculously back on. Yet we drove it only a few yards from the gas station

shopping center in the port of Augusta. Ishmael had protested its construction years earlier, so at least one of our company was familiar with the territory. We decided the most cunning path would be for us to invade the shopping center and steal everything we could get our grubby hands on, getting money to feed the monstrous hunger of the white van through various cryptic return scams and shady pawn shops.

Filling the van with dumpstered chips—Maine seems infested with Frito-Lay dumpsters!—we left with the rations we would need to make it to the next port-of-call, and came up with a scheme along the way. We would walk into a very expensive, over-priced bourgeois store that was known to be exceptionally vulnerable to return scams. Given that it was a small store, an advance squad would distract the few employees with various requests while one guerrilla warrior-thief would walk in—cool as ice—and fill a backpack full of loot, then sneak out, to be intercepted by The Shark which would be waiting obediently outside. We might have known the best laid schemes of sharks and men can go awry.

As a member of the advance squad and perpetrator of innumerable thieveries, even I was shocked by how easily the two employees were hoodwinked into leaving their positions unguarded. We went in, dressed in our best shoe-shopper disguise, and demanded to see the footwear selection. Both employees simultaneously left the cash register and disappeared into the mysterious netherworld of the shoe department that must have lurked somewhere out-of-sight in a back closet of the store. The guerrilla came in, grabbed a backpack, and with a smile on his face began throwing all manner of loot into his bag. It all appeared to be going well when, to our dismay, another customer walked in! This ordinary bourgeois customer immediately noticed that something was not right with this shop, and yelled for the employees. The guerrilla, ever quick, fled the store full backpack in hand before the employees bumbled from their closets of shoes. Not sure what to do, we decided to delay the employees, questioning both of them as regards the whereabouts of our demanded shoes, denying the existence of the shoplifter that the other customer saw race through the door. After several minutes of complete confusion on the part of the employees, they decided that something weird was definitely going on and called the police. We maintained a whirlwind of utter lies and ridiculous demands upon the employees to the bitter end, but when they picked up the phone to call the police, we felt we might be suspected of collusion with the more obvious criminal elements of our enterprise. We politely made our farewells and fled the scene of the crime ourselves. Quickly, I returned to the helm of The White Shark, where a wanted political criminal who had wisely avoided participation in the crimes of the day reminded me we had to get him away from the scene of the crime, and whispered that he had grabbed the loot the criminal had wisely dropped near the Shark on the way out of the store. The White Shark bucked, and we hurried behind the store complex, hoping to outrun the police and find our mia guerrilla friend. Unfortunately, he wasn't waiting for us there, and seeing the police car roll into the shopping center, we quickly sped away

through another exit.

Making very quick decisions, I decided it would be best to get all possible criminals (except myself!), felons, and recently stolen goods out of the van. However, we couldn't leave our friend to the claws of the police—thinking promptly, I suggested to Isabella that she exit the van and begin a search for our fugitive, to tell him that if he was seen he should hide as deep in the woods as possible. She was to meet us in front of the shopping center and inform us of his general location as soon as she communicated this to our companion. Not feeling entirely right for dropping off a South American revolutionary in the middle of a desolate shopping center that was currently being occupied by the police, the van sped off. I wondered what a parallel situation would be in like Brazil—what if a group of Brazilian anarchists left me as a scout in the middle of Sao Paulo? After getting a few miles away from the crime scene, the more criminally-wanted of our crew jumped out the van with the loot, and fled far into the woods after a few minutes' conversation about the various bird-calls and honks I should use to announce the return of The Shark. We spun around and headed back into the mouth of the enemy. Indeed, the police car was waiting outside the store we had robbed, and Isabella was walking about the complex looking nonplussed about the entire situation. I pulled up to the curb and she jumped into the van, informing me that the police were still in the store questioning the employees, and that she had not seen our missing guerrilla. In complete panic, The Shark prowled around the parking lot looking for its missing servant—and out of the corner of our eyes we spotted a shirtless vagrant in the woods on top of a hill! It was our guerrilla, half-nude, looking like some strange escaped Cro-Magnon man gazing upon the concrete landscape of an encroaching alien civilization.

The mind of a thief works in strange ways, and whenever I see a young man with his shirt off in the woods I immediately deduce he is fleeing the police. Obviously, the first thing someone is going to tell a cop about a criminal is his clothing description. So, a bright criminal might change their clothing, or, lacking a spare, just take the shirt off! I wasn't exactly sure what the cop would do if he saw a young and shirtless man in the woods. I recognized the dire situation, and the van pulled up as near as it could as our young guerrilla charged headlong into the open maw of The Shark. Fellow-pirate safe with nary a cop in pursuit, we returned to the mysterious spot in the woods where we had dropped off the rest of the crew.

Unfortunately, in the heat of moment I had completely forgotten where exactly I had dropped them off—and as night approached, it was beginning to look like we would never see them again. I started honking the horn wildly, driving like a madman up and down the street. Out of the corner of my eye I thought I recognized the spot where I had dropped off my compatriots. Jumping out of the car, I heard what could only be the sound of *semi-automatic weapons*! After fiddling with the bird-calls for a few minutes, I just began yelling for them. Within minutes, the criminal underclass reappeared from the woods, scared out of their wits.

by whatever means necessary. The White Shark vibrated as her undersides were torn and grimaced as she suddenly lost speed, but, resolve unshaken, plowed ever onwards towards whatever fate awaited us in the jungle.

Once in Chiapas, The White Shark broke all the rules of safe driving. It was finally among equals, for the Mexicans in the mountains had just as much a death wish as the Shark did. Flying up and down mountains, through rain and mist, through darkest night and with barely any gas, The White Shark never rested. Mayan children would peer from around corners at the strange internationals and their white steed, and would draw strange pictures in the dust that caked on The White Shark's windows. We found ourselves driving down roads with no names, to deliver strange aid to Zapatista villages which, in acts of cartographic imperialism, the government refused to put on the map, due to their refusing to acknowledge the *mal gobierno*. Once, while standing outside at the gates of a Mayan village to track the movements of military, I tried to explain to one of the Zapatistas—who was busily scrawling down military truck numbers on his hand as I wrote my notes down on a pad of paper—where we were from and how the *tiburon blanco* had transported us in. My shaky knowledge of Mexican geography, combined with his lack of knowledge of the geography of United States, led to me scrawling a giant map in the dirt of the Western Hemisphere and mapping out the adventures of The White Shark. As we swapped stories in a strange pigeon mixture of Tzotzil, Spanish, and English of fighting cops and neoliberal globalization from the farm fields of Chiapas to the streets of the Capital, he smiled and told me that if the military stopped threatening his land and the *mal gobierno* was destroyed, he and his children would jump in the belly of the Shark and visit us in the States.

Words cannot express my awe of what the Zapatistas have done. While Marcos and the balaclavas are definitely epic, the real strength of the Zapatistas lies in their autonomous and self-organized communities. Everything we anarchists in The States only talk about, the Zapatistas have actually been doing—shared land for community farming, free schools teaching revolutionary history in which the pupils help design the curriculum, hospitals based on natural remedies, preventive medicine and DIY healthcare; amazing food, coffee, and art cooperatives, etc., and not a single fucking cop! Hell, the police and the tax collectors weren't even allowed in the village—yet I felt safer in Zapatista villages than I do on the streets of any city in The States. The warmth and kindness of the Zapatistas, despite their poverty and the continual threat of attack by the military, radiates and fills their villages with an atmosphere that can only be described as enchanted. Although I barely could speak their language, I felt strangely at home behind the giant black and red gates of the Zapatista villages. So different, yet so similar to what we are trying to do in The States. Giant murals of balaclavas mixed with the huge mustache of Zapata, the circle 'A' mixed with Mexican flags and indecipherable Mayan symbols, everywhere children, chickens, and scruffy dogs. It smelled like some of the wilder collective houses we had back home, on a scale that we could

computers was even bartered to a car mechanic in rural Georgia for a used axle!

The border presented itself as nearly impenetrable. After all, you're not supposed to truck a vanload of computer parts into a foreign country—destined to guerrilla warriors currently engaging in militant conflict against that country's army, no less—and not expect to have questions asked by the border guards. But within a few weeks, the primitivists dropped off the computers, a group of Quakers funneled them to a friendly church, who then, in collaboration with an autonomist sweatshop workers' union, maneuvered them across the border without a problem. Computers in tow, we drove to Chiapas triumphant. The truly remarkable feat was that we, who had no resources besides our unemployment and mania, had, with the aid of the legend of the Zapatistas, helped create, through mutual aid, a network of friends that crossed an entire continent: a network of as diverse backgrounds and ideas as imaginable, ranging from young balaclava-clad anarcho-primitivists to middle-aged Mexican sweatshop wage-slaves and elderly Christian pacifists: a network of friends capable of doing the impossible for an armed indigenous rebellion.

The drive to Mexico City was, even by the high standards of The White Shark, a new record in non-stop driving. Our new friend from the West Coast created a magical talisman for the *tiburon blanco*. Ishmael took it upon himself to merge his body and soul with the machinery of The White Shark. Coffee in one hand and wheel in the other, he drove without rest through deserts, through the megapolis of Mexico City, right through all possible physics of time and distance. It became hard to tell who was really driving, The White Shark or Ishmael, or if there was any difference between the two. Our anarcho-mechanic had regaled us with tales from his youth of being stopped on Mexican byroads and having all his money stolen by bandits, and even our shoplifted *Let's Go Mexico* warned us of two guerrilla armies—the ERP and ERPI, both which are either defunct or never existed, in my opinion—operating in southern Mexico. Not surprisingly, the only real bandits we encountered on our journey were the cops. Cops in Mexico are even more blatantly corrupt than those in The States: they will just pull you over, vaguely complain about the hassle they would have to face in writing a whole ticket out for whatever your fictional offense was, and suggest you just give them the dineros right there so they can forget about the matter. Bribes in hand, funded by the medical experiments to which we had sold ourselves, we passed without incident through shady encounters with the police and even military checkpoints—although once we used furniture to blockade ourselves in the union base where we were sleeping, out of fear of police reprisal.

Dressed in our finest possible tourist clothes, we were always "going to see the ruins," which just happened to be in the middle of Chiapas. To be honest, the fiercest threat The White Shark faced was the danger of the infamous Mexican speed-bump, the *topez.* While speed-bumps in The States seem to be mainly aimed at slowing a vehicle down, in Mexico the *topez* is designed to stop the vehicle

"They're shooting fucking guns, I don't know who they are but these fucking woods are being pumped full of metal!"

Recognizing the perils associated with being stuck in the woods with gun-toting maniacs, we jumped back into the safety of the van and sped off into the distance.

I looked into Isabella's eyes, trying to give some semblance of an explanation of our behavior over the preceding few hours. I didn't know what other types of activists or revolutionaries she had spent time with beforehand—how did this compare with what anarchists did in Philadelphia… or Brazil? I imagine most of the circles in Brazil put our petty crime to shame. I fumbled for words, trying to explain what we were doing. "We're not exactly activists you know… we're anarchists… we're cousins to outlaws, but we have a mission in life, you know?" I could see the gleam in her eye. She knew. Welcome to the States!

2

Revolution *in the* Heartland

The van drove and drove and drove. To all of us in its depths, it soon became obvious that this was not just an ordinary van, for in this van beat the heart of an animal. Very quickly, small parts of its machinery of lesser quality soon fell apart. First it was a tire, then a strange part of the radiator, then yet another unidentified piece of metal. Like some ungodly monster, sometimes it appeared as if the van was reducing itself to the very minimum needed for the trip, shedding parts like the scales of a snake. Four of us in a van, keeping each other in good spirits with stories and memories, dehydrating in the summer heat. Sneaking in and out of campsites without paying, attempting to find back-roads into The Badlands, running out of gas in the middle of The Badlands, a kind indigenous family providing us gas from their own personal store. Clearly we were slowly going mad in the van—I was even stricken with blindness when *poison ivy* got in my eyes! Yet, The White Shark kept chugging along, ruthlessly plowing across the country all night. Ishmael drank cup after cup of coffee, and the black liquid, like noxious gasoline, fueled our madness. Many a lonely gas station was left short of food and gas, and many an anarchy symbol scribbled on a bathroom wall.

Small towns materialized before us, and in every one we found a little cell of anarchists plotting the destruction of civilization as we know it. No town was safe from the rapacity of The White Shark. We would pull into the parking lots of shopping centers, enter without a cent, and exit with our pockets full of fruit and vegetarian sushi—and when we were feeling lucky, one of us would run out with a full shopping cart of wine and soy ice cream! In one small town, the lover of our host called to tell us that some strange vagrants had walked into the store, clearly stole large sums of food, and walked out—and every employee knew, but no one could be bothered to stop them because it was so humorous. Laughing, our host told his girlfriend to come over and meet the culprits. We witnessed anarchy anywhere and everywhere, yelling revolutionary manifestos in the cafés of Des Moines, organizing discussions with Christian straightedge kids about abortion

a mere mortal engine of gears and oil, but an engine of pure destruction. I took it by the anarcho-mechanic for one last check-up. Oil changed, tires rotated, filters placed in, new gaskets. The White Shark was readied for its final and most glorious ride.

Our merry band would drive across the entire country, dumpster-dive some computers, and then take The White Shark and drive the electronics to Chiapas. Nothing could be easier. There were problems, the first and foremost being not having any computers. Never to let something as dreary as reason curb our enthusiasm, we began to pray to the ever-shifty patron spirits of thieves and hobos to deliver unto us computers. As soon as we began to seek the computers, they incarnated themselves in answer to our prayers. A group of semi-professional activists were willing to donate some old computers they had been given by a non-profit group that trained homefree* folks to build computers. Of course, by the time we sorted this out, we were in eastern Canada and they were on the West Coast. With little in the way of possessions—and, as per usual, no money—and absolutely no grasp on the fundamentals of rational planning, we hopped trains across the coldest reaches of Canada, reaching the West Coast by surviving purely on one large pack of oats. Arriving on the West Coast, we promptly gave away our oversized bag of oats to an indigenous family that was hitch-hiking to Seattle to see the world. Not just traveling kids, but a traveling family.

We picked up the computers from the non-profit and then realized to our dismay that without a car we had no way to transport them down the street, let alone all the way to Chiapas. Again, our lack of planning seemed to doom us! We couldn't carry them by hand to Chiapas, and The White Shark we were hoping to drive there was taking a brief respite in the woods of Maine on the other side of The United States. Luckily, a group of anarcho-primitivists was passing across the West Coast on a tour to promote the destruction of civilization, and, although we reasoned that computers were surely included under the category of civilization, we asked for help anyways. After all, the computers were for guerrillas! Despite the irony of the situation, the anarcho-primitivist gang was more than willing to help the Zapatistas, and strapped the computers to the top of their van, a van that happened to be driving all the way to Texas, taking them one step closer to Chiapas. In search of our long-lost White Shark, we got a ride across the country in yet another heroic automobile known only as The Duster, funded purely by an orgy of gas-thievery and, by last estimate, over a thousand dollars in scams, until our ragged crew—fueled by a bizarre combination of stale pizza dough and organic energy bars—returned to the fair woods of Maine. After nearly a month's vacation, and against all odds, The White Shark revved up again, loaded with even more computers from a shady inside job at a major Washington DC corporation, and began its slow journey to Texas, getting in two major breakdowns and one near wreck—almost flipping due to the amount of computers loading it. One of the

* For those who don't know, homefree is a politically correct term for those capitalists call homeless.

7

The Transcontinental Killing Spree

The problem with having sprawling adventures is that, when they are complete, you are left with no option but to outdo yourself—to make even wilder plans involving more impossibilities and undiscovered realms.

We sat in our musty attic and laid down an atlas; earlier, a mysterious old women had approached me as I was repairing computers in the local infoshop, and offered a simple proposition: the Zapatistas needed computers, and all I had to do was to gather them and get them Chiapas. A simple plan, and as Ishmael and I went over the details, it became abundantly clear we had many other things to do as well—protest global financial institutions, eco-defense on the West Coast, meet friends at yet another *Earth First!* Rendezvous—so like the professional composers of adventures we were, we strung together harmonies of actions, triads of locations, rhythms of travels. Trainhopping across the northernmost wastes of Canada, hitchhiking up and down the West Coast—driving The White Shark up and down the East Coast, and then to the fucking Lacandon Jungle! Yes, we were going to criss-cross the entire continent of North America, from Alaska to Chiapas and everywhere in-between, with no stops, no holds barred, no gods and no masters. Such a journey could only deserve one name: *The Transcontinental Killing Spree.*

We offered seats to anyone who wanted to come along, noting that Spanish speakers had priority. Only one mysterious e-mail from a professional adventurer named Hibb on the West Coast answered us in the affirmative. The White Shark was getting weary: we had put on tens of thousands of miles on its already straining hold and everything was breaking down, piece by piece. Radiators, fuel pumps, everything except the core of engine and transmission. Deep in my heart, I still felt that The White Shark was going to make it this time—though The White Shark's transmission was making a high-pitched whistle that might well have been her death knell, we still had our own mission, and The White Shark had not

rights, rioting—and throwing donuts!—against cops on the streets of America's largest suburbs, cheering our hip-hop comrades The Insurrectionists as they spun poetry that mixed equal parts relativity theory and John Brown practice for crust-punks in warehouses and hip art crowds in New York City. We even played basketball with kids outside church, and then snuck in to steal their food! Everywhere—more than mere anarchists—we found anarchy itself.

It was soon obvious that we were in no ordinary van, but a furious animal hell-bent on destruction. We imagined—or did we?—a large fin rising from its white roof; and did not the grill of our vehicle appear to be a gaping maw? The white van clearly had been hiding her secret identity from us the entire time. Like some bizarre automobile superhero—our van was actually a White Shark!

Despite innumerable tires blown, arrests for mob action, being late for our own shows, and alternating between loving and hating each other, the van—by now clearly becoming more and more animal— finally made it to the *Earth First!* Round River Rendezvous in Wyoming. H. Rap Brown, a Black Panther who the American government framed for murder and imprisoned, was only partially right. Anarchy is as American as apple-pie.

The first night of the rendezvous, rumor broke out a local bar was offering—get this—one hour of free beer. Immediately, dozens of smelly anarchists piled into the belly of The White Shark, arms and legs sticking out at all possible angles from every possible orifice. Hardly able to move, I somehow maneuvered the mad creature to said local bar. Upon entering, we were quickly surrounded by *cowboys*: huge men with giant muscles, tight jeans, and mighty mustaches that would make Emiliano Zapata proud. As everyone sat down and drank beer after beer, it quickly became apparent that the anarchists had wandered into the wrong bar. The largest cowboy with the most terrifying visage of all of them began to systematically harass the smallest woman who had come with us. The largest anarchist among us, a mighty redneck himself from the wild woods of Maine, inserted himself into what it appeared was going to be a brawl between the local working class and anarcho-eco-warriors. The night couldn't have been be going in a worse direction—the cowboys, much more well-muscled than ourselves, clearly weren't interested in relaxing the situation.

Luckily, at that moment a local folk singer, himself sporting a mighty beard, rose to the stage. The anarcho-redneck, realizing the fate of The Movement itself lay in the balance, called out for some Folsom Prison Blues:

> *I hear the train a coming, it's rolling 'round the bend, and I ain't seen the sunshine since I don't know when, I'm stuck in* Folsom Prison*, and time keeps dragging on, but that train keeps on rolling, down to* San Anton…
> *… I shot a man in* Reno*, just to watch him die. Now every time I hear that whistle blowing, I hang my head and cry.*

As if by divine intervention, the crowd all began singing: cowboys,

anarchists, eco-warriors, roughnecks, rednecks, and hippies, all dancing as if possessed by The Devil himself. Each of us escaping his or her own personal Folsom Prison, grasping shoulders and swaying to a man who might have been Johnny Cash reincarnated. Nothing could stop the crowd, and the man sang for hours. What's more—in the heat of the moment a young minstrel who had been hopping trains with a banjo jumped on stage and began playing with our cowboy singer. As the folk singer finished his impromptu set and stepped off the stage, the entire Dumpster Country Ramblers—a wild anarchist old-time band if there ever was one!—jumped on stage themselves and began playing their hit single: "*With a Banjo and an AK-47 by my side*." The cowboys kept going wild, and soon everyone was interacting, conversing about just how much they hated politicians, kissing their sweethearts, and sharing stories about the mountains and woods. Hope.

After a series of entertaining workshops, the highlight being How To Kill With A Mag-Lite, we decided it was time for CrimethInc. to manifest itself in a way it never had before, in a way that would set the high water mark for rendezvous activities—as relevant as it could be to the mangy hundred-odd anarchists and earth warriors congregating: we were going to throw a *musical.*

There have always been raging debates amongst the more intellectual of our brethren about what exactly things will "look like" after the revolution—sadly, these conversations do little to nothing to bring anything even slightly resembling a revolution about. Of these debates, one of the most vicious and irrelevant has always been the tireless green vs. red debate. Letting our frustrations fuel the creativity, we let our imaginations mercilessly have at the debate.

What if during The Revolution folks really divided upon that line? What if Ted Kaczynski was freed from jail to lead the dread-locked green anarchists to victory against syndicates of red anarchists who controlled the manufacturing plants of Carhartts and Mag-lites? What if the daughter of Ted Kaczynski, Eugenia, fell in love with the young magnate of the One Big Union, Wobbleo? Yes, we had a plot for a play, a work that would make Shakespeare himself anxious, we would call it Wobbleo *&* Eugenia.

Soon, we had gathered a horde of anarchists from every corner of the United States, with the dreadlocked greens putting twigs through their noses and reds bedecking themselves with full-length bright-red pajamas. While the cleverness of the drama can never be conveyed to those who were not there, at one point the green and the red anarchists, involved in a gang fight á la West Side Story over the various interpretations of Mayday—as either a pagan festival or celebration of workers rights—broke into singing the fairly well-known boy-band tune, "That Way":

> *I want to have a class war, I want to see industrial collapse, I never want to hear you say… I want the revolution* my way*!*

"Let him go!" The cops, terrified with their backs against the wall, began reacting with brutality against the festive partygoers, swinging clubs and releasing pepper spray. The crowd stormed up to the cops, and chaos ensued. Before anyone knew what was happening, the local Indymedia reporter was thrown against a police car, screaming. It was completely mad. Local hoodlums who had spent years dodging the cops were now throwing down with the pigs, grabbing and kicking their way to liberation. Acts of both extreme heroism and extreme cowardice were taking place: women kicked charging cops twice their size, young men kicked themselves free of cops' clutches, crowds yelled and terrified the police, police reacted by pepper-spraying young children. In the chaos, a friend of mine ran up and grabbed the Indymedia video camera that was still running. As the madness engulfed the street, our little quiet town was filled with the closest thing it had seen to a riot in years. As the cops fled the scene with our sisters and brothers in the backs of their vans, one member of the crowd took initiative and began marching the entire party straight to the jail. The cops, by attempting to stop the Reclaim the Streets, had caused the crowd to do exactly what they had most feared—march to the jail and shut down downtown.

The crowd rallied outside and the cops inside the jail panicked, and one by one our compatriots were released. Fifteen arrests and one felony. The Reclaim the Streets had been both far greater than our expectations and far worst than our nightmares. We had never wanted our brothers and sisters to go to jail, and The White Shark crept away to retrieve the evidence from downtown. All the evidence must be destroyed. Yet for one moment, the impossible, the marvelous had broken loose. In the most unlikely of desolate Southern towns, for absolutely no better reason than "we could," we, with no spokesperson, no message, and no leaders, had brought to life the biggest party ever seen. The media was utterly baffled. We had brought down the house, and with it the Police Chief and the feelings of despair that had choked these streets for our entire lives. It was a breath of fresh air so momentous it hurt.

successfully launched their stereo and clambered down the roof and into The White Shark for their escape. Back at the collective house, what could only be described as a barbarian horde was making its last minute preparations to strike. Face paint was applied; a demented giant puppet proclaiming itself The Almighty Bob had arisen from scraps of dumpstered cardboard and cloth, looming ominously from an escaped shopping cart. One of the most cheerful and funny anarchist housemates had spent the entire night cooking bowls of dumpstered chili for the party, and as I walked back into the collective it was clear he had the look of a complete and utter madman in his eye. With few minutes of sleep and a goodbye kiss, I walked into the front yard to see the colorful mob ready to roll. And so it was. Piling the steaming buckets of chili into The White Shark, I watched in amazement as straight from our house a rag-tag festive army of street partiers charged downtown.

Ishmael, once again proving his vigilance, peered out the window of The White Shark. "My fucking God—you won't believe it, there're hundreds of people on the street…" Nothing could have prepared me for the number of people who had congregated on the streets of our downtown. All sorts of people—activists from the community garden, shady hoodlums from all around town, families with children—everyone had so crowded the sidewalk that it was impossible for anybody to move. A few police officers had already arrived on the street, just as dumbfounded as us at the growing crowd. We had honestly not been expecting that many more people than our immediate friends and associates, but here was a raging mob of people wanting to do nothing more than party. As if on cue, a troupe of Capoeira players began their magical and mysterious dance. The crowd surged around them. As the dance entered yet another phase, the chaos began taking over. From around a corner, a funeral procession carrying a giant coffin appeared, walking towards the center of the street, and a man in full priestly robes began a long and ornate speech, proclaiming the Death of Boredom. At that moment, the police were just as baffled, and then the stereo began playing from the rooftops, fire-breathers attacked, and it appeared as if all hell was about to break loose.

Indeed, it did—a young compatriot of mine, the shirtless thief from an earlier tale, looked into my eyes and asked if he should "do it." I told him, if he felt like he could do it, he should. So, grabbed his skateboard and disappeared behind one of the dumpsters The White Shark had visited earlier, and then reappeared with a huge banner. The crowd streamed into the crosswalk, and a lone police officer could not hold them back. A wave of joy and cheering broke out as the street was reclaimed from the cars, the pollution, and the consumerism—if only for one minute. Someone handed me a megaphone and asked for me to take charge. Smiling, I told him that I wasn't the leader and to take the megaphone to someone who had something to say. He insisted, and so I began a chant of "Reclaim the Streets." One of the police officer ran out across the street and jumped on the skateboarding guerilla, and soon had him on the ground. Things got more and more crazed, and the crowd reacted with a storm of shock and fury at the cops. Soon, the cops were surrounded, with the crowd yelling "Shame!" and

Soon, the green anarchists, engaged in acts of excessive pot-smoking, were infiltrated by the young Wobbleo, who wooed the beautiful Eugenia with an ode of how he "*works everyday, and there's nothing that I own…*" She let down her dreads and the burly Wobbleo, red cape and all, climbed into her tree-sit for a night of feral lovemaking. When Eugenia's father, Ted Kaczynski, received word of her laying with the enemy he quickly scolded her: "daughter, don't you know that the Industrial Revolution and its consequences have been nothing but a disaster for the human race!" Soon, war broke out between the feuding anarchists, Wobbleo & Eugenia desperately hopped trains to have their child in a safe haven; the Greens and Reds began hacking each other to bits to the tune of Michael Jackson's "Beat It":

> *You dumpster-dive to live, that ain't primitive, so beat it!*
> *We wear bones through our nose and we'll cut down your cellphone poles!*

When one green anarchist reveals a dirty secret—*I got a trust fund and I got an SUV, it's parked over there right next to a tree*—a hushed silence fell upon the collected forces of *Earth First!* For a second, we thought maybe our satire had hit a bit too close to home for some of those in attendance. After a long, uncomfortable silence, to our relief, the crowd erupted in laughter. Surrounded by the dead bodies of their stubbornly-ideological anarchist opponents, Eugenia gave birth to their green & red love-child—Plaid! Soon after, both the cast and crowd began singing:

> *Why, why did the all anarchists die, was the theory too heavy and the logic to dry? If we dump the ideology and bake a new pie, maybe this won't be the day that we die, maybe this won't be the day we die…*

3

The Shark *versus* *the* International Monetary Fund

Of course, The White Shark soon began looking for meals larger than bourgeois shopping centers and dreams greater than hosting traveling anarchist circuses—The Shark was tugging at her leash. The Shark decided that only the largest of international financial institutions would sate her eternal hunger for blood. Before I realized, I was smuggling a small crew of anarchists to the hotel where the International Monetary Fund was meeting in a few short months. The hotel resembled nothing more than a nightmare of modern architecture: a veritable Death Star of comfort and luxury for the rulers of the world this new millennium. Towering glass doors, giant towers and associated escapades. With all of that might and power centralized in one location, how would we ever sneak in? There is always something to be said for *walking through the front door*.

Four clever, black-clad anarchists walked through the front door and into the lobby of hotel where the International Monetary Fund was scheduled to meet with all the pomp and panache such an endeavor deserves—the staff paid us no attention, as they were clearly preoccupied with preparing the premises for the meeting. It appeared that we were about to crash a party: a party named for some strange corporation with one of those voguish names used to inspire investor confidence, like DigiCorp or NeoTech. Realizing we were strangers in a strange land, we ascended the nearest staircase we could find, desperate to camouflage ourselves with at least a thin veneer of legitimacy. It appeared as if by magic: four mostly empty wine glasses left idly by. We lifted them, and soon had metamorphosed from anarchist secret agents to slightly drunk and bewildered employees at a company party. Indeed, we heard loud pumping music below, and, never ones to forgo a dance party, we returned downstairs and into one of the largest halls I have ever seen. A huge screen towered above hundreds of drunk employees in neat white shirts, with an image of a woman with perfectly manicured hair across a sky only computers could wash blue. She spoke, and it was if God

news: first by word of mouth, and then by wheatpasting every square foot of the entire city with fliers proclaiming the upcoming "Street Party." Whispers, plots, schemes, allies were gathered, and before I knew it the anarchist collective house had stopped drinking and started buzzing with activity.

> *Everybody throw your lighters up,*
> *Tell me y'all gonna fight or what?*
> *Everybody get your shit started . . .*
> *It's y'alls motherfucking party!*

In an act of musical intervention, the Coup came to rock out the night before the Reclaim the Streets. Anarchists converged from the mountains, from the ruined industrial cities further up north, from the swamps to the east and from the soulless suburbs and tiny rural towns. The forces were congregating, and we all went to see the Coup, a revolutionary hip-hop funk group from Oakland famed for their record cover released shortly before September 11th, which portrayed the band blowing up the World Trade Center with a mixer. Here they were in their full glory, with a full back-up funk band, including a bassist with one of the most crazed Afros ever seen, a keyboard player straight out of the Seventies, MC Boots looking like he had smoked one too many joints the night before, and a stout spastic man whose main purpose in the band seemed to be to do backing vocals and jump at the audience like a crazed maniac. The crowd was even stranger, a healthy mix of angry African-Americans of varying ages and mostly white punky anarchists dancing their butts off. At the high point of the whole evening an older black women in her forties got up and did one of the freest and most erotic dances I have ever seen with MC Boots. Hundreds of fliers were spreading all over the dance floor. The crowd was just getting riled up.

> *If you got beef with C-O-Ps*
> *throw a Molotov at the P-I-Gs*
> *'cause they be harassing you and me*
> ya *gotta understand that we're still not free*
> *. . .*
> *Dispose of your dollars and cents, or where you stand,*
> *where you stand gonna be candles, flowers, and incense!*
>
> — The Coup Strikes Back

The entire night The White Shark prowled the lonely streets of our dying tobacco town—huge banners fastened with a crazed homegrown mix of cement and bamboo were hidden in strategic dumpsters. Local DJs and anarchists climbed on top of the burrito shop to set up a sound system on the roof. My alarm bells were ringing: after all, at this point in the evening no one was out except the cops and us. Yet The White Shark evaded capture by the police; the rooftop troublemakers

might: we must never, ever surrender. There is hope—even in the lounges of soulless corporate bookstores—and there are allies in the most unlikely places.

Inspired, the entire process began again. We picked out the largest, cheapest, most fucked up house we could find in town, and, through an act of sheer willpower, transformed it into an anarchist collective. While at first we were worried that we wouldn't be able to find enough anarchists to fill the house, soon there were more people living there than previously thought possible—over twenty rocking people in every little nook and corner, three of us—including myself—in the attic! The White Shark went mad, and my former home soon became the most rapacious and ruthless of thieves. Every night The White Shark would ride into the dark night, stomach empty, and return with all sorts of plunder. Anything that was not nailed to the ground was taken. Chairs, trash cans, cement, wood, nails, soil. We walked into the philosophy department at one of the local universities late at night, and, while no one was looking, grabbed a chalkboard right off the wall, fleeing down a fire escape into the ever-waiting maw of The White Shark. We spent entire days prowling the city, looking for strange items our house needed, thinking of places to run scams, and then entire nights rolling about in The White Shark. The White Shark was a pirate ship, constantly moving from port to port, raiding the soft underbellies of the suburbs for all they were worth. Within a few weeks, our collective house was well stocked. We spent some time engaging in other adventures, starting bands, carousing, engaging in acts of personal drama and infighting. It soon became clear what this town and house needed more than anything else was not just survival against the capitalist machine—we needed to go on the offensive.

There we were, sitting in the living room of our collective, plotting the night away. There were—even in our most small and isolated of Southern towns—other anarchists, some quite formidable ones at that. The local kids had thought of the idea a number of years ago. We were going to have a Reclaim the Streets on the main shopping street of town—where I had wasted my youth in drinking by begging for just another few dimes so I could bribe some local to get me a forty—the street that everyone hung out on, and cursed afterwards for offering "nothing to do." The street where everyone from the local businessmen to the cops knew us by name. It was a completely mad plan and it suited us well.

The White Shark began its nightly prowls yet again, searching for items that could be useful for out Reclaim the Streets action. Paint, both for banners and faces, was stolen. Surgical strikes were executed on party-favor stores, with noisemakers and costumes taken by force. Our friends working as employees at a fabric warehouse winked as we walked out without paying, helping us select the choicest scraps. Thousands of stickers and posters were printed by the good graces of the local university's lack of regard for printing quotas. Giant banners were constructed to redirect traffic, and huge poles of bamboo were cemented into plastic buckets to ensure the traffic would comply. Other anarchists began spreading the

himself was speaking: "*Welcome to the future.*"

Aghast, we looked up, only to see a giant green dinosaur being slowly deflated by dozens of angry computer programmers and bureaucrats smashing it with giant rubber hammers. The future was apparently going to be very strange indeed. Although I was sorely tempted by what appeared to be free food near the sagging dinosaur, we thought actual employees, even if slightly drunk, might ask us which division we worked and so give us away to the authorities. Hand in hand, we fled upstairs.

As we wandered throughout the halls of the future meeting place of the imf, capitalist waste manifested itself as it always does at the most opportune of times. The halls of the hotel were lined with leftover room-service food that even the chubby programmers and fat bureaucrats couldn't finish. I immediately began a one-man mission to devour every last morsel I could. Half-finished martini in one hand, decadent half-eaten ice cream in the other, I was unstoppable. We wandered floor after floor, going up ten whole stories of sleeping chambers and wasted food. Whenever a hotel employee would appear and ask us what were doing, we would leer drunkenly at him using our best acting skills and ask where some random room number was. "Oh, I'm so sorry… I thought I was on the fourth floor!" The security system was completely compromised by four anarchists armed with empty wineglasses.

We became bolder and bolder as night ticked on. Soon, even the drunkest of the employees of the computer company were going to bed, and the hotel became virtually empty… and ours for the taking! We found strange staircases that ventured into the dark depths of the hotel, walked down endless corridors and found doors to empty rooms and storage chambers. We conjectured that if we had been a bit more prepared and had brought a few months' food supply, we could hide in one of those rooms and come out in the middle of one of the meetings of the International Monetary Fund with guns blazing. Using napkins from the silver platters found outside hotel rooms, we scrawled maps of the entire complex.

Eventually, as we infiltrated deeper and deeper underground into service corridors with "Employees Only" written on them, we would occasionally hear what sounded like an employee coming around the corner. Panicking, we would run around corners hold our breath, jumping into elevators and hitting any button we could to escape. Occasionally, we would have to confront some bored night employee late night. They would always be very perplexed by the appearance of four anarchists holding wine-glasses in a corridor which no one in their right mind could possibly have wandered into by accident. Yet, we held to our story: "Oh, we must have walked down the stairs instead of up them to our rooms! What were we thinking?" Human beings, if given implausible situations, tend to accept even the most irrational of explanations as long as these enable them to reconcile whatever is before their eyes with their internal conception of reality.

As dawn starting creeping up on us, we had remarkably finished scouting one of the largest hotels in the world, and we decided to leave. On the way out, as

all proficient scouts remember to do, we checked all doorknobs to see if they were unlocked. Adjacent to the outside door of the hotel we found a solitary unlocked door that led directly into what appeared to be some ludicrously fancy—and completely closed—hotel restaurant. In every hotel restaurant there is a bar. And in every bar there is beer. Our logical chain complete, we jumped over the bar in the restaurant and started trying to open all the locked cupboards. While the last employee at the restaurant had been bright enough to lock the wine-cupboard, they had left a giant case of iced beer and liquor completely open. Inside, it was like a treasure trove of beers with strange German names and liqueurs the like of which people of my social class aren't even supposed to know! We quickly stuffed our pockets with cans of the finest beer and peppermint schnapps, only to realize that there was no way we could carry it all out. After peering out the door, all four of us scampered out of the hotel and to the van, unloading our liquor on the way. Personally, I began feeling a bit paranoid, and thought that maybe this act was taking it just a little too far, that now we were acting in pure hubris. However, the first beer run had only whetted our appetites. Grabbing our backpacks, we meandered right back into the hotel, walking through the front door, straight into the bar, and began filling our rucksacks with alcohol. In we went, and out we went, and in again, and out again—until every last bottle was gone! In an act that can only be considered complete chutzpah, we had stolen the IMF's beer!

We loaded up The White Shark and our one other vehicle with the beer, and came to the realization that we had no idea what to do with the excessive amount of alcohol we had just stolen. The White Shark, drunk off her latest victory, seemed to be smiling upon us. Suddenly, a member of our jolly crew had a brilliant idea: we would give out the beer free at Food Not Bombs! Although it would surely be breaking one of the bylaws of the *International Network* of *Food Not Bombs*©, anyone who had to spend their nights hungry in Washington DC at least deserved a beer to keep them warm. We drove back to our secret anarchist hideout in the depths of the capital itself, and, as we opened the back door, one of our compatriots came stumbling out of bed, red dreadlocks flying. When he heard the idea, he grinned. It was going to be one hell of a Food Not Bombs. Some may call it stealing, but as every modern-day Robin Hood knows: it's not theft, it's redistribution of wealth.

6

The Shark goes back to its native waters.

Within a few months of losing everything—our possessions, our lovers, our homes, our sanity, and nearly the rest of our lives to jail—Ishmael and I sat at a corporate bookstore drinking the finest of coffee and eating ridiculously decadent chocolate cakes. An atmosphere of doom prevailed. We always knew we had hit rock bottom when were at the corporate bookstore. Other people may drink forties on street corners, lay in their beds all night and cry, but we would always fall back upon the easiest of scams: stay up all day in the bookstore drinking bourgeois coffee, plotting the next step in our revolutionary schemes. Still, it was depressing. Perhaps it was the moist carrot cake we were snacking on; maybe it was the autobiography of Bill Ayers we were flipping through; maybe it was the double-shot of espresso in my white chocolate mocha—but the conversation between Ishmael and I became exceedingly animated. So animated, in fact, that the strange and rotund black man with an elegant mustache who was sitting next to us turned around and said, "These people, these people," flipping his wrist at the yuppies and students sipping their lattes that surrounded us; "…these people do not interest me. But you—you interest me."

Within minutes we were engaged in a conversation with someone who spoke, not in mere sentences, but in well-crafted paragraphs with clear theses and dialectical development. The conversation soon turned from the depression of Ishmael and myself, to the grand heights of Kierkegaard and Aristotle, and then returned to ground itself in an analysis of the political economy of global capital. The man, named Sherlock, was originally from Jamaica, but had been educated among the ivory towers at Oxford, and for some ungodly reason had moved to the second circle of hell we called home to teach high school. It was amazingly reassuring, for it would have been almost impossible to imagine backgrounds more removed, yet this man clearly echoed our sentiments: capitalism—no, civilization itself is sick and we're all headed straight towards its collapse; it is the responsibility of ordinary people with the barest thread of decency to fight back with all their

I was again horrified when the police brought back only two small plastic baggies! Inside plastic bag number one was my driver's registration, and inside plastic bag number two were two crisp one hundred dollar bills! The horror! The horror!

After moping around in despair for a few days, I finally got yet another call—the van had been recovered in a ditch in Maryland! I made it out there, and with my ever-trusty keys soon had The White Shark back on the road. My hosts at the secret anarchist hideout were now completely sure I was mad; stumbling back into their house, which was currently engaged in a raging party featuring one of the locals rocking out the Smashing Pumpkins on acoustic guitar, I announced that The White Shark had returned! Determined to leave DC as soon as possible before The White Shark was either kidnapped or ran off yet again, I offered any of the plethora of traveling kids currently staying there a ride South if they so desired it. One dreadlocked hippie agreed, and as she jumped into the van, I suddenly realized that when I got back to my small Southern town, I had no place to stay. I hoped she might have an idea.

Whatever foul force had seized my car had cleaned out almost all of my personal possessions, but had in sloppy fashion left my Aesop Rock tape in the cassette player. As we drove manically through the night, only the incessant mad poetry of hip-hop kept me vaguely sane. We rolled into my small Southern town, and I announced to the anarcho-hippie that not only did I have little funds, but that at four in the morning I could think of nowhere to spend the night save the ruins of the old anarchist collective house mentioned at the beginning of these tales. She agreed that it would be better to sleep outside in fresh air than in the van, so I drove down the dirty road to a house I hadn't seen in months. It looked like a wreck: the windows were smashed out, the ever-creeping kudzu had slowly taken over the much of the broken TVs and bikes and other strange junk that littered the front-yard, and the crazed house appeared to be barely standing, laying somewhere on the strange edge between reality and madness, between enchantment and accursedness. I parked, and walked up to its spray-painted walls: stabbed into the front door was a knife, with a strange note beneath it. The note read, in a scrawled handwriting that seemed familiar: *Here is the ruin of our house, a place where we tried to live the Revolution that we all want. We have all left, so please come in and make your home*. The hippie was absolutely shocked, having never seen an abode, even of anarchists, so utterly magical and yet utterly ruined. "It's like an magical anarchist hillbilly shack in the middle of nowhere…" I smiled and nodded. However, the inside of the house was so littered with broken fridge doors, yellowing books, and broken glass that we decided to climb upon the roof and sleep on top of it. From the roof, I looked down upon the valleys of kudzu that stretched out before me, and as the birds began to sing to greet the rising dawn, I felt implacably at home. I held her hand, and we fell into it, like a fever, like a dream.

4

Intermezzo

The relationship between the driver and her car is hard to understand. *Relationship* is a dry word, a word used by dating guides in cheap newspapers and half-hearted people who are afraid to commit themselves to anything greater than a life of romance novels found in the checkout aisles of supermarkets. The love affair between a car and her driver is hard to understand—lines between us and our methods of transportation blur and blend as we melt into our own machinery. No words can express my affection for The White Shark: it feels more like home to me than any house I've ever lived in, and my sleeping bag has more fond memories associated with it than any mattress the world over. Words cannot describe the many nights I've spent cramped in her metal shell, never able to stretch fully out—leading to my habit of curling up like a wolf even when I sleep in a bed. The White Shark transformed with me: from a respectable minivan in which a mother might drive her child to a soccer match, to a torn up, smelly, vengeful, dark vagabond of the night. The paint started chipping as the white became dirt, a filth that no amount of washing could fix; strange liquids continually leaked from shadowy crevices; the tape player, often the only thing holding my sanity together in the darkest hours of those nights, even that turned when it cannibalized each tape we fed it. However, despite all her flaws—or perhaps because of them—I loved The White Shark. You can have your fancy red Mercedes, yuppie scum—I'd rather spend the night with my old dirty van any day. Rich and arrogant bourgeoisie of the world, behold The White Shark! Your future executioner!

The White Shark had an incredibly insidious effect on its inhabitants. Nothing could describe the effect of watching people disillusioned with crappy jobs or boring lives jump into the van and—before my very own eyes—be transformed into anarchist warriors at the beck and call of any good cause within driving distance. At first it started out as petty theft, money for gas, a few bites of food. As the distances and the glorious heights of the plans increased, everyone in the belly

of The Shark slowly got more grizzled, their bodies more gaunt, and the mad look of pirates entered in their eyes. Defending tree-sits in Ohio, offering eco-defense workshops in poor neighborhoods in Baltimore, defending indigenous lands in the highlands of New York state, fighting for squats in Manhattan—The White Shark carried the knights errant. When you needed us, you just needed to get in touch with one of the associates of The White Shark and the fucking cavalry would be there the next morning.

Vehicles, like friendships, need maintenance: I descended into the inner depths of my vehicle, exploring its nooks and crannies. I knew her limits and she knew mine. I also befriended an anarcho-mechanic, the father of one of the members of The Company Of The White Shark, and he helped me maintain her. He repaired the cars of all the local street kids and neighbors in his own garage, and for far less than any auto-shop would. He knew all the shadiest auto-parts dealers in town, and all the honest ones as well, and his word was as good as gold. As I returned, adventure after strange adventure, we bonded over The White Shark. He would tell me tales of his adventures in New Orleans and Mexico, and I would tell him of stealing food from hotels in French Canada and fighting cops in Philly. He taught me about gaskets and the weird part of some strange metal piece connected to some other piece. In between inspecting one weird problem of The White Shark after another, he would mutter things like, "*That Ariel Sharon's a bloody butcher…*"

Indeed, both the shaggy-haired anarchist and the auto-mechanic with a family in the outskirts of the city agreed that Western Civilization was headed straight towards its doom, and George W. Bush was the madman at the helm of sinking ship. Because of these things, our anarcho-mechanic continued to repair The White Shark, and I continued to drive the distance with the wild beast. We hypothesized that the beast would keep on going until there was nothing left but a whirling engine, a dying transmission, and a rusty metal frame—when that time came I planned to drive her into the ocean, lighting her on fire and giving her a proper Viking funeral.

the entire day in DC reading newspapers and hanging out with friends, then sneak onto the bus—drivers never ask the visibly disabled elderly to pay—to go to Dulles Airport where he slept on the couch. He had apparently been doing this for years! A whole underground network of homeless people living in airports—I was astounded. I wondered if security had any clue—either way, it seemed the fact that it was still happening was exciting; if security knows about it and lets it slide, maybe there is hope for a network of ex-workers. Conversely, what if homeless folks have simply proven to be crafty enough to get away with living in airports all this time?—well fuck yeah to that!

I boarded the plane safely, and praised the heavens for the amounts of subversive activity that happens even in airports.

After two weeks in a snow-bound house eating dumpstered donuts (and stealing a new set of clothes when the weather permitted), I received a mysterious phone call from the contact person whose number I had given the DC police. The White Shark had been recovered, and the police had it. Leaping with joy, I decided to return to DC with my return ticket as soon as possible. When I arrived to DC, I appeared at the police station, where yet another pig greeted me. Yes, my van had been 'recovered' on some street in DC and towed to some strange lot. After paying hundreds of borrowed dollars to get the van back—it turns out the van had been found for a week, and towing and storage costs were ludicrous—I was back on the road. In utmost tragedy, all my possessions had been stolen! Every last item, from my undeveloped film to my records! Either the police were overjoyed to be rocking out to *Resist and Exist* and wearing my smelly underwear, or some petty criminals were having the time of their lives, telling their friends about all the absolutely strange loot they now had.

I wondered what The White Shark had been up to in my absence. Inspected by FBI agents? Used as the get-away vehicle in a bank robbery heist? The possibilities of The White Shark's adventures were endless. Maybe The White Shark had tired of her captain, and hadn't been stolen, but had driven off on her own accord, to go on even wilder adventures than anything she had ever done with me at the helm!

Returning home to my small Southern town, I got a call in a few days that my possessions had been found! I leaped for joy and drove the van right back. Arriving in DC at three in the morning, I parked my car and collapsed in a friend's house. Awaking, I called the police and started walking back to the same police station I had been at only a few weeks earlier, only—to my absolute horror—to notice that where my van had been the previous night, it now was not! Stolen *again* and in only three hours! Stumbling back into the police station with a look of complete horror and disgust on my face—I mean, what if the cops had stolen it again!—I greeted yet another bureaucrat and demanded my possessions back and also to report yet another incident of the exact same van being stolen! Hoping to see my record collection and clothing appear from the depths of the DC Police Station,

taking notes, having never been in the front seat of a cruiser—I finally gave up and the cop wrote the car down as “stolen.” In the pits of deepest despair, I went back to our anarchist secret hideout and began maniacally trying to figure out what I should do. What if the *cops* had stolen the car? After all, it *was* the banner-mobile, and maybe this meant the cops were looking for me? The behavior of the cop I had just met had been friendly enough. On the other hand, the many heads of the capitalist hydra communicate terribly—perhaps it was just luck. In a fit of complete paranoia, I called a friend in a desolate northern state and told him of my situation. In a spirit of complete generosity, he offered to buy me a plane ticket to his snow-bound home. Since 9/11, plane tickets had noticeably fallen in price, so a ticket to his place was actually about as expensive as the gas to get back to my small Southern stable. Not thinking through the possible advantages of hitchhiking or train-hopping, or the obvious disadvantages one would face security-wise at the airport at this point, and just wanting to go somewhere where I would be fed and housed indefinitely and hidden off the map, I agreed to go.

As a friend dropped me off at Dulles Airport, I immediately recognized this was a mistake. Firstly, I was still in complete Black Bloc gear with nothing but identification and a slingshot to my name. Second, army reserve soldiers brandishing large automatic weapons were busy patrolling the airport. Within minutes, I was being harassed. “So, what exactly are you doing here? Do you have ID? Can I see your ticket?” Luckily, they let me walk to the ticket counter where indeed my e-ticket magically incarnated itself, giving me precious validation of my existence in the airport. As soon as the ticket was displayed, the demonic security guards were transformed into benevolent spirits: “Oh, I’m sooo sorry for hassling you. You know, we have to be careful now days…” Yes, I was legitimate member of society with a fucking plane ticket, even if I did have a balaclava around my head and strange red goo all over my body!

Unfortunately, this entire process would repeat every time the security guards changed. Again, they would hassle me, take me into a small strange room, and then, like magic, I would take the ticket from my pocket and they would apologize profusely to me for their fascist behavior. To make matters even worse, it was getting late and my body was exhausted from all the stress of demonstrating and dealing with the mysterious disappearance of The White Shark. However, as soon as I lay across one of the couches next to a small, fat, sleeping elderly man, the guards came up to me (every time a new guard!) and asked me for my ticket. As I again took out my ticket and explained to the guard my position, he let me fall back on the couch and sleep. Strangely enough, the old man opened his eyes and started spouting sage advice.

“Look, if you’re quiet they won’t mess with you—just lay down… I do this every night.” After a few minutes of conversation in hushed tones with the man, he revealed to me his secret: he was a homeless Vietnam veteran, who was incapable of getting a job thanks to his disabilities from battle, and barely able to survive on the meager disability checks from the government. He would spend

5

In the hands of our enemies

The White Shark is a wild beast, and while I may recount some of its dastardly adventures here, I can only recount those I’ve witnessed. For The White Shark has been on many adventures that even I—her monomaniacal Captain—might never know.

The White Shark does not just aid and abet thieves: The White Shark plans full-frontal assaults on the very foundations of capitalism, with a vengeance that would put most terrorists to shame. The White Shark makes plans, and it sticks to them. As just related, The White Shark has a personal vendetta against the global financial system, especially the International Monetary Fund. Not too long after the beer had been stolen from the IMF, the attacks on the World Trade Center and The Pentagon happened—something none of us had prepared for. All the same, The White Shark was first and foremost a van of action; whereas most of its activities after September 11th were too dark to recount in the light of day, it did successfully ferry us away from danger. However, its hunger for blood was insatiable, and before we knew it, it was driving us right back to the meeting of the International Monetary Fund, which, despite the attack, had gone on. The White Shark dropped us off back at our secret anarchist hideout in The Capital, and we began preparing for what seemed to be one of the most frightening protests of our lives. It was clear this protest would be like no other—and it wasn’t going to be the North American version of Genoa we were all hoping for. No, this was testing the waters after a major terrorism attack and subsequent reactionary scare. The results of this test could be fatal as well, for now it was clear our government felt threatened and was looking for someone to lash out against. The bombing had just started in Afghanistan, and it was obvioua that one of the next things on their to-do list was to rid the world of those pesky anti-globalization protesters, especially the mettlesome anarchists.

Nevertheless, when the going gets tough, the tough rise to the occasion. As The White Shark landed in DC with reams of CrimethInc. propaganda—produced for free at our local Kinkos—in under her fins, it became clear that the work was to be done.

A huge banner was being constructed haphazardly by a contingent of artists in the convergence center, but I and one of my most perceptive partners in crime noticed that such a huge banner was going to be completely impossible to carry. After all, it was larger than most anarchists, who by nature tend to be a short lot, and offered about as much tactical defense as a wet blanket. The wily White Shark, ever to the rescue, took us to the nearest home repair store where we began a brutal campaign of return scams to get a large amount of PVC pipe. With much PVC jutting out of the back of The White Shark, we drove back to the Anti-Capitalist Convergence Center and spent the entire night transforming the large banner into a formidable defense barrier by reinforcing its corners with plastic pipes. Our task done, we slept barely a wink before having to mobilize ourselves for the protest. As we wandered back into the Convergence Center, one of the organizers ran up to us and told us that there was a serious problem: there was no way to transport the banners, including the marvelous pipe banner, to the actual site of the protest. Would The White Shark come to the rescue? But of course!

This was clearly going to be one of those sketchy situations. The Black Bloc assembled, several hundred strong, in one of the small central parks in DC. They were just waiting for the banners. The White Shark parked behind some decrepit gas station and released its scouts to check out the situation. When they returned noting the huge number of pigs but the clear passageway for vehicles, The White Shark realized the time to act was now or never, and drove up maniacally right in front of the Black Bloc and released its doors. Out from its bowels came banner after banner, pipe after pipe, flag after flag. As the Captain, I kept an eye on the cops; they had definitely noticed this bit of maneuvering by a mysterious white van, and they started marching towards us. Panicking as the last banner was dropped off, I put the pedal to the metal and The White Shark sped away, down one road after another. Finally, we parked off what appeared to be a road in a residential area, carefully backing our van into the parking spot to have the license plate to the wall, and jumped out. I took all of the money I had to my name out of my pockets, two crisp hundred-dollar bills; afraid they would get nicked by the police in the protest, I hid them in the ashtray. Also, as I was living in the van at the time, all my possessions from my record collection to my two or three pairs of marginally clean underwear were in two huge black containers in the back. Throwing my bandana around my neck, I exited The White Shark and made a sprint to join the Black Bloc.

When I returned the banners were fully assembled and ready to roll. In fact, the main black banner was simply too large—it towered over the heads of everyone in the Bloc except the few tall people like myself. Small eye-slits were cut

into the banner so people could see out of it, and they slowly began advancing. The police—then unaccustomed to bloc tacics and not entirely sure what to do with the giant black thing reinforced with pipe advancing towards the street—foolishly just let it go. Soon the Bloc had occupied the street and began a relentless march towards the building of the International Monetary Fund. The march made it to the IMF building almost without incident, but as soon as we arrived, the police tried to hem us in and everyone feared a mass-arrest. The giant banner, having served its purpose as a giant police-repelling shield, was dismantled and, much to my surprise and joy, the various pieces of PVC piping were re-commissioned as cop-beating clubs. Escaping the grasp of the cops through a charge, I met up with my former lover who I had noticed earlier carrying the banner. I was overjoyed to see her; we split up from the main group of the protest and leisurely strolled over to the Food Not Bombs that was serving in Malcolm X Park. Spending hours reminiscing with her I completely lost track of time, and as sun down approached I ran to get my van from its parking spot—and it was gone!

I was horrified. I was notorious when it came to forgetting the location of parking spaces, so I suspected that I had merely misplaced the old Shark. I patrolled the neighborhood, but nonetheless it became abundantly clear that the van was indeed missing. Seeing as I was currently living in the van and all my money was in the van, I was a stranded castaway. Not knowing what to do and fuming with rage and confusion, I ran to the secret anarchist hideout, and used the same phone that had been used as the legal support number the day before to call the police to report a missing car. They told me they would need to talk to me personally to file a report. Please bear in mind that I had not changed out of traditional Black Bloc gear since the protest the day before: I had my steel-toe black combat boots on, a black hoodie, a black bandana, black fingerless gloves and black fatigues on. No 'anarchy' patches, but definitely not a normal citizen. Even worse, since I had been on the road for a few months, my hair had grown extremely wild and shaggy, and a scruffy beard had developed, along with a body odor that in most circles of society would identify me as homeless. Lastly, the anarchist painters' bloc that had painted the banner I had reinforced and held yesterday had used non-drying red paint on banner, leaving my hands a various parts of my body covered in a strange red substance. Needless to say, I wasn't confident the cops would react well to me. What if they *recognized* me from the Black Bloc the day before? I sure didn't want them driving up to the not-so-entirely-secret anarchist hideout and ringing the doorbell. Panicking, I gave them the address of a building down the road and told them I would meet them outside.

In a few minutes, surreally enough, I was for the first time in my life being driven about in the *front* of a squad car, not under arrest. In fact, the police officer was completely ignoring my appearance and smell and was instead cheerfully chatting to me about "…those kids who steal your car, drive it around for a day, and park it right back." After about an hour of driving about in cop car—mentally